

**“Testimony for March 3, 5pm for the Appropriations Secondary
Education Sub-committee”**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Slossberg, Representative
Fleischmann, and members of the Secondary Education Sub-committee:

My name is...

Debbie Kievits
252 Old Canterbury Turnpike
Norwich, CT 06360

I am a parent, voter, member of the Norwich Youth and Family Services Advisory Board, the Norwich Prevention Council, the Norwich Suicide Prevention Alliance, T.V.C.C.A. Board and Chair of the Board at United Community and Family Services. I am also the Founder and Coordinator of a volunteer youth program called “BullyBusters” in Norwich.

I am writing you to strongly urge you to restore the cuts made in the Governor’s upcoming budget to Youth Service Bureaus across the state. I have a long history with Norwich Youth Services and know what they are able to do for Norwich youth with the small bit of money provided by the State of Connecticut. I was originally trained as a Parent Leader in their Parent Leadership (which is being defunded) Training course. It made me a strong advocate for my children in the school system (one of whom was a young boy with special needs). It gave me confidence and skills, and now I serve on several boards throughout Norwich.

One of my children received counseling through their office and both received support, mentoring and employment through their employment programs. My daughter took the youth leadership training as well. They are grown and on their own now and I spend my time coordinating a program called “BullyBusters”, a volunteer group that exists to bring youth and adults together to reduce Bullying in school and in the community. It is my passion! And I collaborate with Norwich Youth Services to achieve my goals. Together we run a summer diversion program for at-risk kids with money they obtain by grant writing. We collaborate to bring World Youth Day to Norwich every year and to run a theater group with an anti-bullying theme.

You must understand what amazing things are done with the small amount of money the state gives to municipalities for their Youth Service Bureaus. In 2013-2014, Norwich Youth Services was able to leverage \$434,565 because of the money given by the State Department of Education for Norwich’s YSB. YSBs are about the “Bang for the Buck”

In conclusion, please reconsider the proposed cuts to Youth Service Bureaus and maintain them in the Department of Education.

Sincerely,
Debbie Kievits